CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

By: Eric L. Hall
Conover Fire Department
Conover, North Carolina

An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program

October 1998

ABSTRACT

The Conover Fire Department, a combination organization of 38 members, did not have a career development plan for it's full-time employees. This resulted in confusion and frustration of the individuals due to a lack of a clear sense of direction to assist them in their personal and professional development. Because of individual concerns they could not function effectively as team members. This negatively impacted both the individual and the department by limiting their personal growth and contributions to the organization. There was an immediate need for a career development plan designed to address these problems in order to prepare the department for future growth.

The purpose of this research was to establish a career development plan to assist employees with their personal development by identifying the positions that may be attained during the course of their career and clearly identifying the steps necessary to qualify for those positions. Research was conducted using primarily action methodology. The research questions investigated included the following:

1. What is a career development plan?
2. Why is it desirable for the Conover Fire Department to have a career development plan?
3. What positions are appropriate for inclusion in the career development plan?
4. What training, education, and experience requirements should be included in the career development plan?
5. How will the career development plan be implemented?
6. How will the career development plan affect the department's personnel budget?

Procedures utilized included the review of career development theory as well as the identification of the desirable components of a career development plan.

The information gained was then organized and combined with additional knowledge of the author, resulting in the creation of the Career Development Plan for the Conover Fire Department. The plan was presented to the City Manager for review and recommendation to the City Council.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The City of Conover Fire Department is a combination organization comprised of 8 full-time personnel and 32 volunteers. Historically the paid positions have developed relatively slowly compared to the increased responsibilities of the department. Beginning with the hiring of the city's first full time fire chief 20 years ago the authorization of new positions has typically occurred as the department's responsibilities and the city's financial resources have allowed. This gradual building of staffing has resulted in a department that does not have a career development plan for it's full-time employees. This has led to some confusion among employees concerning the current expectations of management as well as difficulties in personal career planning due to the absence of a well-defined future. These problems will continue to be of concern as the number of paid positions increase.

The purpose of this research project is to develop a career development plan for the full-time positions, both current and anticipated, of the City of Conover Fire Department. A well-defined path to the positions that individuals aspire to will benefit both the individual and the department by identifying goals and objectives.

Action research methodology was employed to answer the following questions:

1. What is a career development plan?
2. Why is it desirable for the Conover Fire Department to have a career development plan?
3. What positions are appropriate for inclusion in the career development plan?
4. What training, education, and experience requirements should be included in the career development plan?
5. How will the career development plan be implemented?
6. How will the career development plan affect the department's personnel budget?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Organized in 1942, the Conover Volunteer Fire Department provided protection for the city (originally a town) of Conover, North Carolina and a portion of the surrounding rural areas. In 1977 as a result of increasing demands on the volunteer fire chief, the city manager and council authorized the position of a full-time paid fire chief for the city. Within a few years, a full-time engineer was also authorized to further improve the department's ability to provide adequate service. In the early 1980's annexations dramatically increased the size of the city. The affected area was formerly protected by the St. Timothy Volunteer Fire Department. With a large portion of their fire district taxes now going to the city, St. Timothy volunteers agreed to merge with the Conover Fire Department with the city assuming all debts, assets, and responsibilities for the operation of the department. At the time of the merger in 1982 there were approximately 70 active volunteers serving the newly formed district.

During the 80's the department experienced an increase in both its responsibilities and the number of annual responses. Unfortunately, during the same time, the department also experienced a decline in the number of active volunteers. As a result, department and city leaders determined that it was necessary to hire two additional full-time drivers to ensure a timely response to emergency incidents and to maintain the department's equipment. In 1991 the city was required by the state of North Carolina to provide a state certified fire inspector to enforce the newly adopted state fire code which demanded that an inspector's position be added to the staff. Between 1996 and 1998 three additional engineers were added to enable full-time staffing of both stations. Currently, 30 volunteers complement the paid staff consisting of a chief, inspector, and 6 engineers.

The 38 member department protects an area of approximately 20 square miles which has experienced steady growth and development since the 1970's. A large number of diversified industries swell the workday population to nearly 30,000. The city operates under the council-manager form of government with the fire chief responsible for all aspects of fire protection.

The only two positions that have remained constant during the two decades of career staffing history are those of fire chief and engineer/driver. In the 5-year period from 1991 to 1996 the positions of Lieutenant/Fire Prevention Officer, Captain/Fire Inspector, and Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal were created and abandoned in response to the additional duties and responsibilities assumed by the author prior to becoming Chief.

Since the creation of the second paid position in the early 80's there have been questions among the career personnel concerning their future. These questions address issues including positions that will be available and the applicable promotional requirements. Of particular concern is the education and training that will be included in the requirements for advancement. With no career development plan presently established employees must anticipate the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they should be pursuing in preparation for future advancement. This situation has already led to confusion and frustration among current employees, which is certain to continue and worsen if no direction is provided.

Substantial growth and development of the city is continuing at a constant pace ensuring the need and justification of additional personnel and positions in order to continue to provide quality fire protection. The development and implementation of a career development plan will provide the direction needed by all career fire service personnel, both current and future. This will benefit both the individual and the organization tremendously by defining crystal clear goals

and objectives as well as eliminating employee confusion and misdirected or non-existent ambitions.

This project relates to the Executive Development course in several ways. Providing individuals with a clear picture of the future enables them to function more effectively as team members, sharing in common goals for the good of the organization. The executive may them assist employees in the own individual career planning. This serves to improve the overall organizational culture by empowering followers to determine their own destiny.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is a career development plan?

Plunkett & Attner (1994), describe a job as a specific position that an individual holds in an organization for which they are compensated. However, a career encompasses a lifetime: it is a person's entire life work and includes their attitude toward and involvement in those jobs.

Writing on career development, Sonnenburg & Allman (1993), say "Development attempts to prepare a person for new and greater challenges that will be encountered in another, more demanding job and to enhance career progression. All development is really self-development, and cannot occur without the employee's personal commitment" (p. 113).

Higgins (1987), reports that while many organizations have career development programs based on career paths and management development for their employees, most are loosely defined and disorganized attempts at career management. He also says that the individual must take responsibility for developing his/her own career.

Sonnenburg & Allman (1993), state that training is often a job requirement; however,

development when available is merely an offering to the employee and may be rejected. Development, they say, should be a never-ending process that can be made a part of the employee's daily routine. Cotham (1988), writes that many employees do not realize that career growth is the sole responsibility of the individual, not the employer.

Bruegman (1988), describes a career development guide as a document that provides parameters for successful advancement within the organization by clarifying both the job requirements as well as the methods of achieving the necessary skills and abilities. The dual focus is on the organization's expectations and the employee's responsibility to plan his or her own career. He goes on to list criteria for a good career development plan. These include establishing specific, realistic, and measurable goals with deadlines, both short term and long range. Goals should be flexible, relate to the person's work, and be built into the routine work plan if possible. Finally and most importantly, the effort required to attain the goals should be challenging.

Whisenand (1979), provides a much broader perspective of a personnel development program including recruitment, selection, training and education, career planning, career counseling, performance appraisal, and all other human resource considerations such as health and safety. He suggests that in addition to personnel development that management development for those destined to be top decision-makers is also of vital significance, especially in the fire service. He goes on to say that personnel development is directed not only toward improving the performance of incumbent personnel but also serves to create a pool of personnel qualified for the positions of advanced generalists, specialists, supervisors, managers, and executives. For these reasons, he holds that personnel development incorporates both the concepts of career development and management development.

Sherman and Bohlander (1992), report that “There is a growing awareness among employers that a career development program can benefit not only managers, supervisors, and their subordinates, but the entire organization as well” (p. 238).

Most organizations, says Higgins (1987), with career development programs concentrate primarily on two aspects of career development: career pathing, or identifying probable career paths through the organization; and management development and training in technical, human relations, and conceptual skills.

Bittel and Newstrom (1995), write that “A career path maps out the most logical and practical roadway to a position, or series of positions, that an individual believes holds the most attractive occupational and personal rewards” (p. 530).

The concept of a career path for fire service personnel is not new. Carter and Rausch (1989), report that as early as December 14, 1972, four technical committees were directed by the National Professional Qualifications Board for the Fire Service to develop minimum standards in each of the following areas: fire fighter, fire instructor, fire investigator, and fire officer. While the intent was to develop performance standards for assessing firefighter skills, a major objective was to provide career steps for individuals. This resulted in the establishment of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards for the four disciplines mentioned.

A career represents a person’s lifetime of work. If the person desires to successfully advance into more demanding and rewarding positions planned and purposeful development must occur. The employer or organization may guide this development, but it is ultimately the individual’s responsibility. While career development programs have many important components, a career path is one of the most important. Career pathing provides the employee with a roadmap of the organization’s opportunities for advancement, reducing the risks of

unproductive efforts by the individual. The concept of career planning in the fire service has existed for over two decades and in recent years has received much more attention.

Why is it desirable for the Conover Fire Department to have a career development plan?

According to the reference book *Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance* (1997), there are approximately 300,000 professional, salaried firefighters in the United States. This strong relationship between professionalism and salary implies that all paid firefighters are professionals.

Strickland (1995), on professionalism in the fire service writes,

> The fire service has evolved from an organization whose single responsibility was fire suppression to an emergency services organization that provides fire suppression, fire prevention, fire code enforcement, fire investigation, fire inspection, emergency medical services (basic and advanced life support), hazardous materials mitigation, and specialized rescue operations. With these increased responsibilities come some of the greatest response challenges in our history. Professionalism is the key to our present and to our future (p. 311).

Strickland (1995), cites definitions from *Webster's Dictionary,* which defines the words *professional* as "of, engaged in. or worthy of the high standards of a profession" and *profession* as "a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training, and involving intellectual skill."

Based on these definitions Strickland (1995), identifies training and education as key elements in becoming a professional. He adds experience into this formula and concludes that for

one to be considered a fire service professional, he/she would be trained, educated, and experienced in the field of emergency services.

Kramer (1995), also describes a learning triad consisting of three components: training, education, and experience. He says that while an effective firefighter should possess a measurable amount of all three components, the desired proportions of each change, with education becoming the most important as an individual advances higher in a career.

Americas Top 300 Jobs-A Complete Career Handbook (1996), states that for firefighters to progress to higher level positions, they must acquire expertise in not only the most advanced firefighting equipment and techniques, building construction, and emergency medical procedures, but also in non-technical areas such as writing, public speaking, management, budget process, and labor relations.

The public image of firefighters is based upon a strong assumption that paid firefighters are professionals. Professionalism both implies and demands that an individual be extremely competent in his/her profession. The fire service has undergone a dramatic transformation from the task of squirting water to that of a community problem solver. The wide array of new challenges makes it necessary for one to possess knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from considerable education, training, and experience. As a firefighter, one needs practical hands-on problem solving skills to combat emergency situations. However, as the firefighter advances into managerial and administrative positions, considerably more knowledge is needed for cognitive problem solving, long-range planning, budgeting, and other vital responsibilities.

What positions are appropriate for inclusion in the plan?

According to projections provided by *Career Guide to America's Top Industries* (1995), employment of firefighters is expected to increase approximately 14% over the ten-year period

of 1995 to 2005. The growth in this field will stem from the rising demand for services at the local level fueled by increasing populations.

America's Top 300 Jobs – A Complete Career Handbook (1996), goes further to predict that much of the expected job growth will occur in smaller communities with exploding populations served by paid and volunteer members to better meet growing incidents and complex fire protection needs.

The city of Conover is one such community, having experienced significant growth during this decade. This is evident in the *City of Conover Growth Analysis* (1998), which reports that in the period from 1990 until 1998 population has increased 26.5% while the area has increased 41%. The city's population is currently at 6,911 in an area of 8.5 square miles; however, the surrounding unincorporated area of 11 square miles to the north of the city that is also served by the fire department raises the population, though the exact increase in not known. Due to the city's many industrial and commercial facilities, the number of workers entering the city each day is estimated at 30,000. The City of Conover Fire Department currently has three full time positions authorized by the city council: Fire Chief, Fire Inspector, and Fire Engineer *City of Conover Salary Plan* (1998). In addition to the chief and inspector, there are currently six engineers staffing two stations around the clock. With the current economic climate, growth in every aspect including fire department staffing is expected to continue.

Ulrich (1979), provides a recommended structure for a small paid fire department. It includes the positions of Fire Chief, Secretary, Fire Marshal, Deputy (or assistant) Fire Chief, Fire Captain or Lieutenant, Fire Engineer, and Firefighter. A structure based on this should serve the city of Conover fire department for the next five to ten years.

While the three current full-time positions are currently adequate for the department's

responsibilities, growth is certain within a few years due to the prosperity of the community.

What training, education, and experience requirements should be included in the career development plan?

Training

Strickland (1995), states that many training certification programs exist, but virtually all are based upon the guidelines established in the NFPA standards relating to professional qualifications for fire service personnel. Currently NFPA standards exist for fire fighters, fire apparatus driver/operator, airport fire fighter, fire officer, fire inspector, fire investigator, and hazardous materials responder. In addition, if a certification program is nationally accredited, the individual may move about in the accreditation system without fear of losing credit for certifications received in another community or state.

The state of North Carolina administers a nationally accredited firefighter certification program which includes the following levels: Firefighter (levels I and II), Emergency Rescue Technician, Emergency Vehicle Driver, Fire Instructor (levels I-IV), Driver-Operator, Hazardous Materials (Awareness, Operations, Technician, and Expert levels,) Fire and Life Safety Educator (levels I-III), and Fire Investigator.

While fire inspection is a required course in Firefighter certification, in North Carolina one must be certified as a Fire Inspector through the North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board to perform code enforcement. This certification system has probationary and standard certificates in three levels, with successful completion of educational classes and standard exams required for certification at each level.

Education

Kramer (1995), points out that it is generally assumed that the minimum education sufficient for an entry level firefighter is a four year high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma, commonly referred to as a GED.

Cote and Bugby (1988), reported some 10 years ago that an increasing number of fire departments were establishing advanced educational requirements, such as a fire science degree from a community college for all officers or a bachelor's degree for chief officers. In the years since that report, there has been an emerging trend in this country toward linking higher education directly to promotions (Kramer, 1995).

Many community colleges across the country now offer associate degree programs in fire technology; however, bachelor degree programs in the field are very limited. The most widely recognized of the bachelor programs is the "Open Learning Fire Service Program" available through seven universities throughout the country. The University of Cincinnati in concert with the National Fire Academy chairs this program, which allows students to complete courses without traditional classroom attendance (Kramer, 1995).

Cote and Bugby (1988), also noted that it was not uncommon for fire chief positions to require graduate level degrees in public administration and management. As officers progress into management and administrative positions the focus changes from the technical aspects of fire science to the issues involved with their responsibilities.

Similarly, Kramer (1995), suggests that a master's degree program for the fire service is unnecessary at this time. The reasoning is that once a firefighter has earned both an associate and bachelor degree they will most likely have advanced out of firefighting into management. They will then need management and administration skills that must be obtained through a master's degree in either business administration or public administration.

Experience

Kramer (1995), states that the old adage “experience is the best teacher” is universally recognized as a valid point. Many departments will except experience in lieu of other requirements for training and education. Firefighters often gain knowledge through work experiences, personal, and professional endeavors which is equivalent to that taught in collegiate courses. Colleges and universities have recently began to realize and recognize this practice, with many offering at least partial credit upon entrance as a result of this experiential learning.

A careful mix of training, education, and experience are desired at all levels of the fire service. As a minimum requirement, anyone entering the fire service should have a high school education. This should be supplemented with a formal training program in firefighting skills, preferably based upon NFPA and/or state standards. As firefighters move up in their organizations, education becomes more important. Current educational opportunities available in most areas include two- and often four-year degrees in fire technology, advanced degrees in administration and management, and specialized programs such as the Executive Fire Officer Program. Experience in any position from firefighter to chief can only be earned in time, and is often of such value that it is partially credited toward educational and training requirements.

PROCEDURES

The subject of this applied research project was selected as a result of an existing opportunity for improvements observed by the author within his fire department. A structured plan for the personnel and professional development of full-time firefighters was needed. Problems that were identified included employee’s uncertainty concerning their futures and the absence of direction regarding personal and professional development. It became obvious that a

program was needed to guide and direct not only current employees, but also future employees as the department experiences growth.

The research project included literature reviews of materials in the author's personal library, the Conover Fire Department's library, and the Catawba County public library conducted between May and October, 1998.

The literature review was conducted to provide information sufficient to answer four of the six research questions. This was accomplished by reviewing information on career development to determine the advantages and disadvantages of this process. Both private sector and public fire department management textbooks were utilized. The need for a plan in the Conover Fire Department was examined with consideration given to the past, present, and future of the department's growth, which is related to the growth and development of the community that it serves. Career guidance materials were reviewed to determine future opportunities in the fire service over the next five years. The past and present structure and function of the fire department was examined to determine what positions were appropriate for inclusion in the career development plan. Recommended structures for small and medium sized departments were also studied to determine future positions that should be included in the plan.

The components necessary for an effective career development plan were identified, again, through study of both private sector business management and public fire department management textbooks. For each of the three major components (training, education, and experience) local, state, and national requirements were reviewed and considered for inclusion in this plan.

The information gathered was used in the development of job-specific outlines. Positions for inclusion in the plan were determined based on the department's anticipated growth during

the next five years. The development outlines contain requirements in the areas of training, education, and experience. Each outline specifies the requirements necessary to attain the position, requirements while in the position, and recommendations for lateral or upward mobility into other positions.

Finally, an implementation plan was designed to allow current employees a sufficient adjustment period in which they are expected to utilize the plan to their benefit.

RESULTS

The result of this research project is the development of a Career Development Plan for the Conover Fire Department. The plan includes not only the current positions but a number of anticipated future positions as well. The plan is not to be misconstrued as an employee hiring plan but simply a tool to be used as positions are authorized by city council.

Answers to research questions.

Question 1. What is a career development plan?

A career development plan is a tool that may be used by management and employees to guide and direct personal and professional development. This is accomplished by identifying the necessary skills and abilities required to competently perform in a particular position. These skills and abilities are primarily gained through training, education, and experience. The plan provides employees with a sense of direction and the development required to attain the positions that they aspire to.

Question 2. Why is it desirable for the Conover Fire Department to have a career development plan?

The Conover Fire Department was a volunteer organization until hiring it's first paid chief some 20 years ago. Since then the paid positions in the combination department have grown slowly and sporadically, primarily driven by need and available funding. Currently with eight employees in three positions, the department is experiencing growing pains as it struggles to maintain quality service to an ever growing and rapidly developing community. The department's management must now address the current obstacles concerning personnel development as well as preparing for the growth that is sure to occur over the next five years.

Question 3. What positions are appropriate for inclusion in the career development plan?

The current positions of fire chief and fire engineer will be included in the career development plan, with the duties of fire inspector being included in a new position. The anticipated positions to be included are those of lieutenant, captain, fire educator, fire marshal, and assistant chief. Each position will have several levels of accomplishment in order to allow individuals the means to fully develop before advancing to other positions.

Question 4. What training, education, and experience requirements should be included in the career development plan?

The North Carolina Fire and Rescue Commission is the certifying agency for firefighter training in the state, and offers nationally accredited certification. Based on the NFPA professional qualifications, disciplines include but are not limited to firefighter, emergency vehicle operator, fire educator, and fire investigator. The North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board is the certifying agency for fire inspectors in the state, with probationary and standard certification at three levels. The National Fire Academy offers advanced training in

many areas including fire prevention, hazardous materials, fire inspection, and leadership training, with the Executive Fire Officer Program recognized as the premier fire officer training and development curriculum in the United States.

A number of collegiate educational opportunities are currently available. An Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology is available locally through a partnership of local community colleges. A Bachelor of Science Degree is available through a partnership of the University of Maryland and the National Fire Academy (NFA) open learning/degree at a distance program. A bachelor's degree program based on the open learning/distance concept is also anticipated to begin within one year through the North Carolina University system. Although anticipated, a master's degree program in Fire Protection Administration is not yet available and may not be as desirable as the same degree in Business Administration or Public Administration.

Experience is a broad term that may mean many things. Experiential learning should be measured in both time and personal involvement. For example, a fire officer in a busy company may gain more experience in one year than an officer in a less active company would gain in three years.

Question 5. How will the career development plan be implemented?

The career development plan must by reviewed and approved by the city council upon recommendation of the city manager. Upon adoption, current employees would be given a twelve-month period from the implementation date of the plan to comply with the requirements for the desired position. Failure to comply with the requirements for the position shall result in disciplinary actions as detailed in the city personnel policy. Additionally, new employees lacking

the full requirements may be hired during the implementation period. The employees must comply with the plan at the same date as current employees. For example, if the plan is implemented January 1, 1999, all employees must be in compliance with the minimum standards for the desired position by January 1, 2000, or face disciplinary actions. Following the effective date of the plan, all new employees must meet all requirements for the position desired as a prerequisite for employment.

Question 6. How will the career development plan affect the department's personnel budget?

The immediate impact of the career development plan on the department's annual operating budget will be minimal. The salary for current positions will remain unchanged, and new positions within the career development plan will be assigned to the appropriate pay scale as determined by the city manager who is responsible for the administration of the salary plan.

DISCUSSION

Firefighters, particularly those who are paid for their work, should be professionals. Strickland (1995), strongly agrees with this, saying that the public both expects and deserves qualified, competent, and professional emergency service personnel. An individual may posses some of the necessary components of professionalism such as courtesy, neatness, pride, self-motivation, and people skills as part of their personal values. However, other important factors in professionalism such as knowledge, skills, and abilities usually require learning on the part of the individual. This most often is accomplished through the individual's pursuit of training, education, and experience in the particular field of interest (Kramer, 1995).

In fire suppression positions, technical skills are usually the most desirable due to the hands-on nature of the tasks that firefighters are faced with. A 1992 study supported this when it was determined that all 50 states have some type of firefighter training certification program in place (Strickland, 1995).

The fire service has a great history of promoting the best and most experienced firefighters to officer positions; however, the new officer is seldom prepared with the skills in personnel management and decision-making needed to successfully deal with the new responsibilities. Therefore, career development in the fire service must also include management development (Whisenand, 1979). At this mid-level position, additional training in these areas is desirable, and learning from bad experiences is often the only means of becoming a good officer.

As officers advance even higher, education becomes more important, while the need for many technical skills decreases (Kramer, 1995). For instance, in most departments, the chief is not called upon to perform forcible entry, ventilation, or search and rescue. Instead, he/she must be concerned with budget preparation and justification, presenting information to high-level officials, community and business leaders, and making statements to the media. For this reason, Kramer (1995), suggests that fire department managers pursue a bachelor or master degree in business or public administration, instead of fire protection technology.

Continued growth and development bring an increased demand for services that is certain to fuel the growth of government services, including the full-time staffing of the fire department (America's Top 300 Jobs- A Complete Career Handbook, 1996).

As evidenced by the most recent *Growth Analysis* (City of Conover, 1998) the city has undergone considerable growth and development since 1960. In the past seven years alone, the population has increased by over 26%, the area served has increased by 41%, and the assessed

valuation of property has increased by over 71%. Therefore, in addition to including current positions, a number of anticipated future positions were also included in the plan.

The author has personally experienced the journey from entry level (engineer) to chief during the past 10 years. The information obtained by means of the literature reviews is very relevant and on target. While most entry level personnel readily complete initial required training and certifications, most founder in pursuing other training and education for lack of direction. With only basic skills, the experiences that the individual may be exposed to are severely limited. It is through the author's personal experience and observation of others that the need for a personnel development program is deemed necessary.

It is the author's opinion that the availability of a career development plan for the paid members of the Conover Fire Department will assist those individuals in their personal and professional development if they choose to take advantage of the guidance and direction provided. Once these employees have started the journey on the career path of their choice, they will have a better understanding of both their current position in the organization and the opportunities which are available in the future. The plan also has the potential to assist volunteer members who aspire to paid positions by providing them with insight into the preparation needed for entry level positions, as well as providing long-range career goals.

This will not only benefit the individuals, but also the entire organization and the community that it serves by producing professional fire service personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the recommendation of the author that the career development plan resulting from this research be adopted and implemented as soon as possible. For the purpose of budget planning and position allocation it is further recommended that the plan be implemented on January 1, 1999, and fully effective on January 1, 2000. The plan will be presented to the city manager during the month of November 1998 with a request for recommendation and inclusion on the December 1998 city council meeting agenda. Council adoption in December would make possible an implementation date of January 1, 1999. This will make the plan a valid tool for the purpose of future staffing projections and requests that may be presented to city council during the annual council-staff planning retreat held during the month of February.

Adoption of the plan will result in the ability of the Conover Fire Department employees to begin a process of career planning and development. This will serve to direct each individual in the pursuit of training, education, and experience to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the level of expertise that they aspire to attain and will effectively eliminate the issues of uncertainty currently experienced by the employees.

REFERENCES

America's Top 300 Jobs – A Complete Career Handbook (5th ed., p. 300). (1996). USA: JIST Works, Inc.

Bittel, L. R., & Newstrom, J. W. (1995). *Personal development portfolio*: *Toward mastery of your job. What every supervisor should know.*(6th ed., pp. 525-558). Westerville, OH: Glencoe/McGraw Hill.

Bruegman, R. R. (1988). *Coaching for top performance;evaluations. Making a difference: the fire officer's role*. (pp. 171-200). Ft.Collins, CO: Emergency Resource, Inc.

Career Guide to America's Top Industries (2nd ed., p. 213). (1995). USA: JIST Works, Inc.

Carter, H. R., & Rausch, E. (1989).*: Fire service personnel management. Management in the fire service* (2nd ed., pp.301-338). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association.

City of Conover (1998) *Growth Analysis*

City of Conover (1998). *The Classification Plan. Personnel Policy.* (pp. 60-62)

Cote, A., & Bugbee, P. (1988). *Fire department organization, administration, and operation*. *Principles of Fire Protection.* (pp.291-320). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association.

Cotham III, J. C., (1988). *Facing Change-Taking Charge. Career Shock* (pp. 3-46). Brentwood, TN: JM Productions.

Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance (10th ed., p.14). (1997). Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company.

Higgins, J. M. (1987). *Life and career planning. Human Relations-Behavior at work* (2nd ed., pp. 446-470). New York: Random House.

Kramer, W. M. (1995).*: Training and education.* In J. R. Batchtler & T. F. Brennan (Eds.), *The fire chief's handbook* (5th ed., pp. 325-354). Saddle Brook, NJ: PennWell Publishing Company.

Plunkett, W. R., & Attner, R. F. (1994). *Staffing and leading*. *Introduction to Management* (5th ed., pp. 299-498). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Sherman, A. W., & Bohlander, G. W. (1992*) Career development. Managing human resources:* (9th ed., pp. 237-267). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing Company.

Sonnenburg, P., & Allman, J. (1993). *High performance: Staff development and maintenance. Taking the lead: the management revolution* (pp.111-120)Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Strickland, R. J. (1995). *The national professional qualifications system.* In J. R. Batchtler & T. F. Brennan (Eds.), *The fire chief's handbook* (5th ed., pp. 311-324). Saddle Brook, NJ: PennWell Publishing *(5th ed.)*. Saddle Brook, NJ: PennWell Publishing Company.

Ulrich, R. L. (1979) *The fire department: management approaches.* In J. L. Bryan & R. C. Picard (Eds.), *Managing fire services* (pp. 68-91). Washington, DC: International City Management Association.

Whisenand, P. M. (1979). *Personnel management.* In J. L. Bryan & R. C. Picard (Eds.), *Managing fire services* (pp. 315-333). Washington, DC: International City Management Association.

APPENDIX A

PROPOSED

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

for the

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT

PROPOSED

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

for the

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Submited to: City Manager Lloyd B. Beasley, Jr.
Conover, North Carolina

Submitted by: Fire Chief Eric L. Hall
Conover Fire Department

November 1998

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This Career Development Plan is intended to assist full-time employees of the City of Conover Fire Department with their personal and professional development in order to develop their career to the level desired.

The Career Path shown below is a graphic representation of the positions that a firefighter may advance through, as opportunities become available.

The Job Outlines that follow contain three types of information specific to each position. Each outline describes (a) the requirements that an individual must meet in order to be awarded the position, (b) requirements that an individual must meet while in the position, and (c) the future opportunities and requirements that may be attained upon successful performance of the current position.

Career Path

Chief

Assistant Chief — **Fire Marshal**

Captain III — **Fire Prevention Officer III**
Inc. Fire Insp. III, Fire Ed. III

Captain II — **Fire Prevention Officer II**
Inc. Fire Insp. II, Fire Ed. II

Captain I — **Fire Prevention Officer I**
Inc. Fire Insp. I, Fire Ed. I

Engineer III

Engineer II

Engineer I (Current entry level)

Firefighter III

Firefighter II

Firefighter I (Future entry level)

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHIEF OFFICER

Fire Chief

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology
Advanced computer skills including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

Experience: Ten years in fire suppression and/or prevention bureau or equivalent, including:
- minimum two years in chief officer position
- minimum five years in supervisory position

Training: National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program
North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Instructor II certification
North Carolina Inspector III Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid N.C. Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration or Public Administration

Experience gained through duties: Direction and supervision of subordinates in emergency and non-emergency settings
Incident scene management
Management and Administration of municipal fire department
Public Relations
Interaction with local, state, federal governmental officials

Training: 36 hours of approved training annually

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHIEF OFFICER

Assistant Fire Chief

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology preferred, or
two-year degree in field related to fire science, administration, or management
Advanced computer skills including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

Experience: Eight years in fire suppression and /or prevention bureau or equivalent, including:
- minimum three years in supervisory position

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Instructor II certification
North Carolina Inspector III Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid N.C. Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology

Experience gained through duties: Direction and supervision of subordinates in emergency and non-emergency settings
Incident scene management
Assist with management and administration of municipal fire department
Public Relations
Interaction with local, state, federal governmental officials

Training: National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Fire Chief

Required for advancement: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Captain III

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical writing

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent, including:
- minimum two years in supervisory position

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Instructor II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level III Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Advanced computer skills including Microsoft PowerPoint

Experience gained through duties: Direction and supervision of subordinates in emergency and non-emergency settings
Incident scene management
Performing Level III inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire investigations
Assisting with fire education

Training: National Fire Academy course "Leadership III"
Advanced Fire Investigation
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Assistant Fire Chief

Required for advancement: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Protection Technology

Fire Prevention Officer

Required for advancement: No additional

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Captain II

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical writing

Experience: Four years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent, including:
- minimum one year in supervisory position

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level II Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Advanced computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel

Experience gained through duties: Direction and supervision of subordinates in emergency and non-emergency settings
Incident scene management
Performing Level II inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire investigations
Assisting with fire education

Training: National Fire Academy course "Leadership II"
National Fire Academy course "Initial Fire Investigation"
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Captain III

Required for advancement: North Carolina Fire Instructor II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspection III Standard certification

Fire Prevention Officer

Required for advancement: No additional

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Captain I

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills
Technical writing

Experience: Three years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Direction and supervision of subordinates in emergency and non-emergency settings
Incident scene management
Performing Level I inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire investigations
Assisting with fire education

Training: National Fire Academy course "Leadership I"
Basic fire investigation course
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Captain II

Required for advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspection II Standard certification

Fire Prevention Officer

Required for advancement: No additional

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Engineer III

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent, including:
- three years experience in apparatus operation

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Driver/Operator certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Maintenance and operation of fire apparatus and equipment
Assisting with inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire education

Training: Incident Command
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Captain I

Required for Advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I certification

Fire Prevention Officer I

Required for Advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Engineer II

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent, including:
- two years experience in apparatus operation

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Driver/Operator certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Maintenance and operation of fire apparatus and equipment
Assisting with inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire education

Training: 36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Engineer III

Required for Advancement: National Fire Academy course "Managing Company Tactical Operations: Tactics
Experience in apparatus operation

Fire Prevention Officer I

Required for Advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Engineer I

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent, including:
- one year experience in apparatus operation

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Driver/Operator certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Maintenance and operation of fire apparatus and equipment
Assisting with inspections and pre-incident planning
Assisting with fire education

Training: 36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Engineer II

Required for Advancement: Experience in apparatus operation

Fire Prevention Officer I

Required for Advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Fighter III

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical writing

Experience: Three years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Emergency Vehicle Driver certification
Basic Pumps

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License Classified B

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Advanced firefighting and rescue techniques
Assist Engineer with maintenance of apparatus and equipment

Training: 36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Engineer I

Required for advancement: North Carolina Driver/Operator certification

Fire Prevention Officer I

Required for advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I Standard Certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Fighter II

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent

Experience: Two years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills

Experience gained through duties: Advanced firefighting and rescue techniques
Assist Engineer with maintenance of apparatus and equipment

Training: Basic pumps course
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Firefighter III

Required for advancement: North Carolina Emergency Vehicle Driver certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Fighter I

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent

Experience: One year in fire suppression bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter I certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's license

Requirements while in Position

Education: No requirement

Experience gained through duties: Firefighting and rescue techniques
Assist Engineer with maintenance of apparatus and equipment

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification classes
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Firefighter II

Required for advancement: North Carolina Firefighter II certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Fire Marshal

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: Associate in Applied Science of Fire Protection Technology, or
two year degree in field related to fire science, management, or administration
Advanced computer skills including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent
Three years in fire prevention bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level III Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operation certification
North Carolina Fire Investigator certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's license

Requirements while in Position

Education: Associate of Applied Science Degree in Fire Technology

Experience gained through duties: Management of bureau activities including
- personnel management
- budgeting
- supervision of all bureau activities

Training: National Fire Academy Executive Officer Program
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Assistant Chief

Required for advancement: Management and supervisory experience

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE SUPPRESSION BUREAU

Fire Prevention Officer III

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical writing

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent
Two years in fire prevention bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level III Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification
North Carolina Fire Educator III certification
North Carolina Fire Investigator certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: Advanced computer skills including Microsoft PowerPoint

Experience gained through duties: Assisting Fire Marshal with management of bureau activities
Performing all required fire inspections and plans reviews
Performing fire investigations
Developing, scheduling, performing fire education

Training: National Fire Academy course "Plans Review for Inspectors"
Advanced Fire Investigation class
North Carolina Fire Investigator certification
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Fire Marshal

Required for advancement: Associate in Applied Science in Fire Protection Technolgy

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Fire Prevention Officer II

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent
Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical writing

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent
One year in fire prevention bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level II Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification
North Carolina Fire Safety Educator II certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: No requirement

Experience gained through duties: Performing all required fire inspections
Performing fire investigations
Developing, scheduling, performing fire education

Training: National Fire Academy course "Initial Fire Investigation"
National Fire Academy course "Plans Review for Inspectors"
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Fire Prevention Officer III

Required for advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level III certification
North Carolina Fire Educator III certification

CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Fire Prevention Officer I

Prerequisite Requirements

Education: High School Diploma or equivalent

Experience: Five years in fire suppression bureau or equivalent

Training: North Carolina Firefighter II certification
North Carolina Fire Inspector Level I Standard certification
North Carolina Hazardous Materials Operations certification

Other: Valid North Carolina Driver's License

Requirements while in Position

Education: Basic computer skills including Microsoft Word and Excel
Technical Writing

Experience gained through duties: Performing all required fire inspections
Performing fire investigations
Developing, scheduling, performing fire education

Training: Fire Educator Level I certification
Basic Fire Investigation class
36 hours of approved training annually

Advancement Opportunities

Fire Prevention Officer II

Required for advancement: North Carolina Fire Inspector Level II Standard certification
North Carolina Fire Safety Educator II certification